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MADIGAN: NEW LAW IN EFFECT TO COMBAT SYNTHETIC DRUGS

AG Investigators, Local Law Enforcement Remove Nearly \$689,000 Worth of Synthetic Drugs from Stores Statewide

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today commended Gov. Pat Quinn for signing an important law this week that will help combat the spread of synthetic drugs in Illinois.

Attorney General Madigan's office drafted the bill, which amends the state's Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act to target the retail sale of synthetic drugs. Specifically, the new law addresses the fact that synthetic drugs are packaged with misleading labels designed to give the impression that the products are legal and "not intended for human consumption." These deceptively labeled products are then sold in retail stores.

"We have found that drug makers lure people into using these drugs by disguising them in misleading packages and passing them off as legal products. The manufacturers are also continually reformulating these toxic substances to circumvent the drug laws," Madigan said. "This new law ends the game of catch up and cracks down on retail sales by classifying as illegal any chemical that's sold to be taken as a drug, regardless of what it's called or how it's labeled."

The new law defines a "synthetic drug product" as any product containing a controlled substance not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The law makes it a Class 2 felony, punishable by three to seven years in prison and a \$100,000 first offense fine to sell or possess with intent to distribute any form of synthetic drug products in Illinois. The law also significantly increases the penalty for selling or possessing with intent to distribute any drug that is misleadingly labeled, making it a Class 2 felony.

"Law enforcement now has a clear and strong prohibition on these sales that synthetics manufacturers cannot circumvent with some newly concocted recipe or modified label," continued Attorney General Madigan.

The legislation became effective with the Governor's signature on July 31 and was sponsored by Rep. Jerry Costello II and Sen. Kwame Raoul.

This legislation is part of Attorney General Madigan's ongoing work with local police and county sheriffs throughout the state to address the growing use of synthetic drugs, particularly among teens and young adults. In December 2011, Madigan launched retail store sweeps, known as "Operation Smoked Out," shortly after hosting the state's first emergency summit to increase awareness of synthetic drugs. Since the retail store visits began, store owners across the state have relinquished more than 31,000 packages of synthetic drugs and bath salts with a street value of almost \$689,000. In June, Madigan hosted a joint meeting with the Indiana Attorney General and law enforcement leaders from Illinois and Indiana to share information gathered and strategies developed by law enforcement agencies in the border states. And last month, investigators from Madigan's office participated in the first-ever nationwide takedown of synthetic and other dangerous designer drugs.

The rise in the use of synthetic drugs can be seen in the dramatic increase in calls to Poison Control Centers about synthetic marijuana and "bath salts," another type of synthetic drug that contains chemical compounds that mimic the effects of cocaine or methamphetamine. In 2010, Poison Control Centers nationwide received 2,915 calls related to synthetic marijuana use. That figure jumped to 6,890 calls in 2011. Reports concerning bath salts were made 303 times to Poison Control Centers in 2010. A year later, the centers received 6,072 calls about bath salts.

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